Chapter 11

Sentiment Analysis as a Tool to Understand the Cultural Relationship between Consumer and Brand

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ABSTRACT

One of the most relevant issues that companies, offices and marketing experts, sociologists and scholars must address studying a new brand or product launch is without any doubt the impact - in terms of feedback - on the consumer sentiment. The study of users’ opinions on a specific product or brand has changed with the advent of Web 2.0, which has overcome the old surveys model leading consumers in a too complex and not genuine area, reaching more sophisticated research or even better tracking their opinions directly “on the field”, i.e. in the community where this exchange of views and information happens naturally and not artificially. The analysis of consumers’ opinions on social media provides enormous opportunities for the public and the private spheres. Concerning the last on the reputation of a certain product/brand or firm is strongly influenced by the voices and negative opinions published and shared by users on social networks. Indeed, companies need to adapt their behaviour monitoring public opinion.

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1. INTRODUCTION: THE ENTERPRISE ACCORDING TO SYSTEMIC APPROACH-CAS

A complex adaptive system is a system which fits, organizes and evolves over time depending on the dynamics of the context in which it is structured. Some examples of complex systems are living organisms such as cells, animals and people, or companies, organizations, policies, cultures, for instance. Everyone is able to survive if it fits and/or influence the dynamics of the environment in which it lives. In recent decades the line of studies of management that considers the enterprise as a whole system of life it has prevailed. Duality enterprise-system refers to a set of complex and varied elements which performs the acquisition and production of informations related to the context, goods and services, to be exchanged with stakeholders in order to achieve a certain purpose of survival, social legitimacy and/or competitive advantage, through the creation of social-symbolic identity expressed by the product/brand. (Beer, 1985).

The firm as a complex system, which is constantly in conditions of instability due to the dynamic environment in which it is structured, re-organizes its components in order to adapt skills and competences to the requirements of the interlocutor (De Toni, 2011). In other words, the company - in order to ensure its survival - participates and/or stimulates an exchange with relevant stakeholders, characterized by specific interactions bidirectional/cybernetic governed by the needs of individuals (Ashby, 1962). Indeed, the result, to ensure mutual survival, will be represented by products/services which express common elements of the language and characteristics values. In a complex adaptive system such as an enterprise, the stage of adaptation is usually underlined by the constant redefinition of the relationship between it and its environment, in which various actors and factors must be taken into account, first of all the role of individual consumers. (Cipresso, Foresti, Balgera & Villamira, 2010).

The company, seen as a social organization, due to the bi-directional relationships created with stakeholders, is able of receiving necessary information both for the achievement of its competitive aims and the needs of interlocutors. Furthermore, informations gathered in these communication processes are the natural basis to understand the stakeholders needs and the self-organization ability, to adapt behavior and content. As a matter of fact, once identified, those informations will be combined with the other existing ones for a total reworking of corporate conduct, whose final product will be the consistent/consonant behavior that the company will adopt in relation to the interlocutors which compose the frame we refer.

The perception process of this information, or to better explain the input part, is given by the process of ‘enactment’ (activation) thanks to which is made a distinction on the basis of which is part of its specific context and that where will seek to establish relationships, and instead of what belongs to the environment unknown. This stage is conducted by organ of governance, in other words an observer of the environment - generally understood as a set of tangible assets and interlocutors -, with which the enterprise system aims to interact. The governing body of the company identifies and organizes the resources for the creation of relationships necessary to achieve the final aim of the company, namely its survival.

Once gained such informations, the enterprise system will enable a range of behaviors aimed at creating and maintaining interactions with members. These behaviors may be the expression of scheduled and/or spontaneous roles. According to that, marketing strategies and communication product/brand play a key role always considered unconventional and placed in universal standards (thus refusing to implement the best practices, or standard models applicable to multiple contexts) and better suited to the heterogeneous scenario to be observed in order to provide a better interpretation of reality.